

# **CITY OF REDMOND ARTS COMMISSION**

## **MINUTES**

**September 18, 2003 - RETREAT**

**Old Redmond Schoolhouse Community Center**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Chairperson Rebecca LaBrunerie, Kay Tarapolsi, Jill Schmidt, Una McAlinden, Heidi Houghton (arrived at 6:40 p.m.), Phil Teller, Latha Sambamurti, Kate Cochran

**ABSENT AND EXCUSED:** Youth advocates Joscelyn Doleac and Nicole Rollofson

**STAFF PRESENT:** Melna Skillingstead, Arts Administrator; Sandra Bettencourt, Recreation Program Manager; Pam Maybee, Recording Secretary

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## **AGENDA**

**Note: Bold/italic text denotes Staff and Commissioner follow-up resulting from this meeting.**

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Rebecca LaBrunerie called to order the *RETREAT* meeting of the Redmond Arts Commission (RAC) at 6:30 p.m. at the Adair House, Anderson Park.

**Notations:** LaBrunerie reported that Cara Byrne has resigned from the Arts Commission due to other commitments; therefore, there is now a position open for a new Commissioner. Commissioners acknowledged Byrne's valuable contribution as a Commissioner, and especially as co-chair of the Arts Education Committee.

### **II. EVALUATION OF PROJECT SUCCESSES**

Each Commissioner gave their 6-month project evaluations:

- **Sambamurti – Performing Arts:**
  - Need to choose artists of better quality/skill/talent for future Arts in the Parks programming
  - Spend more time selecting
  - Concentrate on publicity and marketing to overturn poor audience attendance

Comments from Commissioners:

- Advertise every single week
- Divert show dollars to advertising
- Recognize competition with Marymoor Park shows, which were heavily promoted; confusion for public as to who was in charge
- Marketing rule: It takes three impressions before something is remembered/registered
- Dates on posters is not a marketing tactic
- Ask QFC to give flyers to customers; offer to put QFC logo on flyer
- Performance nights should be consistently the same: Banner should say "Every [Sunday] night"
- Focus on marketing in advance and higher quality performances
- Arts in the Parks were enjoyed by the public
- Offer year-round performances
  - Need funding for this
  - *Multiculturally* idea offered in fall and spring

- **Schmidt – Visual Arts:**

- Formed partnerships with Seattle Art Museum and Redmond Library by helping them get their artwork located
- Perrigo Community Park and Grass Lawn Parks call for artists
- Plaza at Fire Station 11 is progressing
- Rotary will be doing fund raising for benches at Fire Station 11 Plaza
- Missed Art Outside the Box this year
  - Schmidt suggested RAC consider a new chair for the committee and that she would work only on Art Outside the Box; ***she will e-mail all Commissioners to ask another to consider chairing the committee.***
- Outdoor Sculpture Exhibit going well
  - Need to re-examine questions that go out to artists
  - Richard Ruiz is designing/producing the booklet
  - Schmidt is writing text for the booklet; however, text is still needed from artists, and Schmidt needs to visit the sculptures
  - Installation time frame was too spread out; Schmidt suggested a one-time install in June 2004 (Tarapolsi confirmed that date is anticipated)
- Mural under the Leary Way bridge: Woman in charge of the project dropped out
- Arriba Stature and her project at ORSCC worked out well with volunteer artists; gallery opening next month 10/9/03, 6:00 p.m.
- Pam Rembolt, a previous Visual Arts Committee member, helped form and is a member of the new Sammamish Art Commission (connection potential with them through her)

- **McAlinden – Arts Education Committee:**

- Provided the arts education curriculum for elementary schools

- Arts Education Committee must detach from its future success because they cannot control the funding, training, supplies, etc., needed by the school district
  - Arts Education Committee will support LWSD in a minor way
  - Washington Alliance for Arts Education has hired McAlinden as a consultant to support the organization; possibly do grant writing
    - Tied in with the OSPI (a state-wide project) to bring arts to the schools
    - Could limit McAlinden's time for RAC contribution
  - Time to bring in new leadership to the Arts Education Committee
  - No control over the docent program
    - Must give handbook to teachers first, before the docents
    - It is a process needing three to four months to develop by the Arts Education Committee
    - ***LaBrunerie will put the docent training discussion by all Commissioners as an agenda item during a regular RAC meeting***
  - Arts Education Committee is in a re-evaluating place, assessing its next move
- **Teller – Visual Arts:**
    - Teller noted he has been on a 10-month learning curve
    - Was pleased to join with everyone, and especially to create his own program
    - Expectation of own time commitment was not realistic with his other competing priorities
  - **Houghton – Marketing/Fund Raising:**
    - Houghton has been supportive where she was able
    - She would like to see marketing and fund raising up to speed
    - ***LaBrunerie asked to discuss the marketing of the Winter Performance Series before the posters go out***
  - **Tarapolsi – Outdoor Sculpture Exhibit and Grant Committee:**
    - Outdoor Sculpture Exhibit
      - Splitting up installation dates was not a good idea, as it took four months
      - Artists did not show on time for installation
      - Need to have it happen within two weeks; get it back on schedule where it used to be
    - Grants
      - Tarapolsi recommended reducing the rounds from two to one next year to lessen the time commitment, and give the funds all at once
      - Commissioners had these responses:
        - ♦ Not enough applicants the first round; therefore, a need for a second round
        - ♦ The amount available could be reduced
        - ♦ The amount does get used up
        - ♦ Arts Education Committee can take brochures to school principals to announce the grant (***Tarapolsi and Houghton volunteered to go to the schools to hand out the brochures***)

- ♦ Schools, however, need to come up with matching funds (40%, which could be “in-kind”); if not in their budget, they would not apply for the grant
  - ♦ Expand ideas of education
  - ♦ Arts Education Committee could partner with schools and Grant Committee help the schools apply (to help them administer it);  
*Commissioners will discuss this at a future meeting*
  - ♦ *The topic will be put on the RAC regular agenda to discuss as a possibility, whether or not it would be realistic to drop to one round*
- **LaBrunerie – Literary Arts:**
    - RASP and *Write Out Loud!* event
      - LaBrunerie favored continued financial support
      - No increase in attendance
      - RASP and Skillingstead do the work
      - Marketing is a concern since the event opens late in the spring (during spring break and possibly Easter) (Skillingstead has asked them to consider changing their timing; she is awaiting their response)

Following Commissioner evaluations, Skillingstead expressed she was very honored to be part of such a dynamic group, and thanked Commissioners for all their hard work.

### **III. CULTURAL CONGRESS ARTS COMMISSION ASSESSMENT**

Self-assessment survey (as detailed for Seattle Arts Commission) was used to determine the RAC status in various areas. After filling out the assessment, counting the strongest, and voting with stickers, the following categories reflected the strengths:

#### **Strong:**

- Leadership (strongest)
- Planning
- Legal and financial requirements
- Organizational systems

Commissioners re-applied their votes to show the weakest to the strongest:

#### **Weakest to strongest:**

- Resource development (tied for weakest)
- Evaluation (tied for weakest)
- Communication
- Legal
- Planning
- Leadership (tied for strongest)
- Organizational (tied for strongest)

Schmidt noted she marked many as adequate/not strong; good enough, but not outstanding. Because of individual time priorities, each Commissioner can only do so much. She asked whether this was as good as could be expected as stretched as they were, and would it likely change. She believed it probably would not, given the current manpower, support, and project list.

McAlinden proposed getting the numbers up on current program attendance before expanding manpower; be realistic as to what each one can take on. She advocated that RAC be known for quality of what Commissioners do well.

LaBrunerie made it clear that the task list is for information, not pushing deadlines. Tarapolsi added there should be a distinction of when things would be done, for example, the task within the time designated.

In respect of future projects, McAlinden proposed that Commissioners list talents offered and time availability. LaBrunerie encouraged that Commissioners do step up when able, recognizing all Commissioners are volunteers. She advocated focusing on getting people to the shows and stepping up their reputation in the City.

McAlinden asked Commissioners to keep a spare volunteer capacity (not always full with commitments) to insure involvement in the new City Hall. Teller suggested focusing on the variety of current programs that each does well, so there is time to volunteer for other things.

Houghton observed the Commission works better as committees, versus working as a whole. She advocated the biggest and strongest role to play as a whole would be in marketing and funding, while committees continue to focus on their projects.

#### **IV. CURRENT GOALS**

Houghton reviewed a 2-year history of RAC's attempt at addressing its goals:

- Revised mission statement two years ago
- Addressed outdated goals and objectives at last year's retreat; did not produce new goals, rather a re-organizing of RAC's format instead

Houghton stated that as RAC moves into fund raising, it will be necessary to focus on goals in order to obtain grant dollars. Currently, sponsors of specific arts programs are through WASAC, King County, Microsoft, and Safeco.

Commissioners and staff had these comments:

- Money is not currently available for all that needs to be accomplished.
- Timing was not good in the past for approaching City Council during budget cuts.
- Private money coming to the City without the marketing side will not happen.

- RAC has not established enough partners.
- The goal is to create public/private partnerships.
- Need to go to businesses with costs for such programs as *Not Hollywood*.
  - Show slides that advertise programs and sponsors before showing the films.

Houghton asked Commissioners to decide between two kinds of goals: (1) guidelines (long term), or (2) outlined points of action. Schmidt believed broader guidelines would be appropriate, since Commissioners change and partnership approach changes. LaBrunerie and Schmidt noted that to increase awareness in RAC expertise would mean more attendance by the public.

McAlinden suggested the following broader guidelines to bring a dynamic and flow:

1. To achieve excellence in skills
2. To nurture and support RAC programs and other groups
3. To promote (drive) attendance, communication, and reach financial supporters and community
4. To build public/private partnerships to support

***Cochran offered to create a draft of these ideas and generate an online discussion with all.*** Tarapolsi proposed that each year Commissioners assess whether or not they reached their goals. LaBrunerie added that Commissioners must consider the goals when implementing efforts and programs.

## V. **BRANDING STRATEGY/MARKETING**

LaBrunerie introduced the branding idea in order to drive public attendance. She noted a list of concerts is not marketing because it is not a call to action. LaBrunerie conveyed the branding strategy she learned at the Cultural Congress:

### **Why it is important to brand an arts organization:**

- When a brand is agreed upon, marketing flows from that.
- It is important to develop thinking in terms of a brand.
- Some branding will cost money.
- Branding is an image, feeling, or experience derived from a trademark, service, name or experience.
- The brand is important to drive attendance.
- A brand tells who you are and what you stand for, what you bring to the relationship, and of what quality (best) are you worthy
- Brand strategy is the process of defining how one is different from others, what is uniquely relevant.

### **Marks of a successful brand (as it relates to RAC now):**

- *Understand the meaning of the brand as it relates to the customer*
  - RAC: getting arts to the public

- *Value proposition, i.e., “What’s in it for me” (Customer knows they are getting the best)*
  - RAC: does not have a value proposition; does not understand what our audience wants in the arts
  - Brand conversation is a 6-month research project
- *Delivers benefits that customers desire*
  - RAC: delivers what it chooses, not what the public necessarily wants
- *Relevant and connectable*
  - RAC: arts are not relevant/connectable to the citizens
- *Clearly positioned*
  - RAC is not recognized
  - Ask, Do we want Redmond to be known for arts or for RAC?

LaBrunerie defined benefits of a strong brand as that which gives a high return on the investment. She characterized arts organizations with brands are more than product, rather, an entire organization; a mind-set that guides, that goes into brand marketing (i.e., marketing is a sub-set of branding). LaBrunerie urged Commissioners to think about developing a brand.

McAlinden summarized that RAC needs to justify that it takes credit for the project. She asked staff to see if RAC could be billed first above Parks and Recreation so the community recognizes the branding. ***Bettencourt will investigate with Parks and Recreation staff.***

Schmidt presented a sketch of a logo idea.

**The steps to plan a brand strategy (what it conveys to people):**

- 1) mission statement
- 2) core values
- 3) goals
- 4) brand assessment
- 5) articulate brand promise (what the public perceives RAC is saying to them); this is done with tactics
- 6) living the brand (interfacing with the community)

LaBrunerie summarized branding has to do with the perception and feeling impressed to the public about what to expect from RAC. Under that umbrella comes marketing, PR, logo—all consistent with and matching the brand.

Commissioners had these comments:

- Non-profits have different brands than businesses making a profit; RAC is volunteer-based and does not charge
- Our mission statement is very close to our brand; need to get the message out
- Must go through the six steps sequentially, then brainstorm adjectives associated with the brand

Commissioners concurred to go through the 6-month plan. LaBrunerie noted key marketing—e.g., call to action, consistency—would still need to occur simultaneously with the 6-month planning. Commissioners had these suggestions:

- Take a small 20-minute session every meeting over the six months.
- Talk about core values next month.
- Look at the mission statement: Does it cover what RAC wants, does it create those inner perceptions?
- Shift the agenda back to where committee chairs e-mail to the recording secretary their short, bulleted summary of meeting minutes before the RAC meeting.

*Commissioners agreed that committee chairs would e-mail their committee highlights to the recording secretary so as to provide more time at the RAC meetings for branding discussions. The recording secretary will e-mail a reminder to all Commissioners at the time the agenda draft is e-mailed. Their highlights will be included in the next month's minutes.*

*Commissioners will begin the branding discussions during the first 20 minutes of the RAC meetings.*

LaBrunerie noted these marketing ideas:

- Be willing to spend money—must have funds in order to market
- Hit the target audience three times with the message
- Consistency in marketing (e.g., every Friday throughout the Winter Performance Series )

LaBrunerie asked Commissioners to consider a change in philosophy: Reduce shows to have more money for marketing. Schmidt suggested starting with fewer, yet quality, shows to bring in more people (i.e., money), then use some of that money to build more quality shows. LaBrunerie emphasized there must be a call to action for marketing, not an educational list.

Teller suggested looking at others' ideas to see what has worked best in the past, e.g., establishing artistic identity. RAC could have an artistic identity with a banner across the street. LaBrunerie suggested sandwich boards, banners, and signs. Houghton advocated advertising in newspapers. She noted that often newspapers would give other coverage when money is spent in their media.

Commissioners discussed marketing of the Winter Performance Series:

**Placement:**

- *Redmond Reporter* (December through March in every issue)
- Banner: hung from trestle or City-owned fence/buildings (*staff will research banner placement and schedule*)
- Brochure (no posters)



- Inserts in *Focus* magazine
- Schools
- Hand brochure along with evaluation to patrons at shows

**Ads:**

- Call to Action (including a tag line)
- Leave space at the bottom of the ad for corporate logos
- A consistent/same advertisement
- Winter Performance Series: Same day, time, place (just different show)

**Timing:**

- Front load the series (the most popular draw to be the first shown)
- Deadline for winter *Focus* is next Thursday (9/25/03). *Skillingstead will ask if RAC can have a brochure insert.*

**Living the Brand:**

- Must have the brand, quality, with consistency

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion to adjourn by:** Commissioner Schmidt

**Second by:** Commissioner Cochran

**Motion carried:** 8-0 unanimous

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Recording Secretary, Pam Maybee

**NEXT REGULAR REDMOND ARTS COMMISSION MEETING:**

**October 9, 2003**

**Old Redmond School House Community Center**

**7:00 p.m.**